

**EMBARGOED FOR RELEASE**  
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**Studies on combat related substance use and abuse to be funded by NIH and VA**  
*Innovative federal partnership should yield important findings about returning military personnel*

Eleven research institutions in 11 states will receive more than \$6 million in federal funding from fiscal year 2010 to support research on substance abuse and associated problems among U.S. military personnel, veterans, and their families. The National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA), part of the National Institutes of Health, is collaborating with the Department of Veterans Affairs, to award grants that will examine substance abuse related to deployment and combat related trauma. The National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism (NIAAA), and the National Cancer Institute (NCI) are also NIH partners in this endeavor. NIH is awarding more than \$4 million in grant funding; the VA, around \$2 million.

The funding opportunity announcement, released last July, solicited applications on the causes, screening, identification, prevention, and treatment of substance use and abuse — including alcohol, tobacco, illicit and prescription drugs and associated problems. Institutions that are receiving awards are Brandeis University, Waltham, Mass.; Dartmouth College, Hanover, N. H.; the Medical University of South Carolina, Charleston; the National Development and Research Institutes, New York City; the University of California, San Francisco; the University of Minnesota, Twin Cities, Minneapolis and St. Paul; The University of Missouri, Columbia; and VA Medical Centers in West Haven, Philadelphia, Little Rock and Seattle.

Most of the research is directed at substance abuse and related conditions experienced by veterans returning from wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. There is a growing awareness that military personnel returning from these prolonged conflicts have a variety of serious problems, including depression, anxiety, sleep disturbances, and substance abuse. Some face these and other diverse symptoms as a result of traumatic brain injury or post traumatic stress disorder related to battle experiences. Many of these conditions are interconnected, and contribute to individual health and family relationship crises. There has been little research on how to prevent and treat unique characteristics of these wartime-related issues.

Several projects will look at treatment seeking patterns — why and when veterans ask for help, and why many don't. Scientists will explore treatment strategies, including cognitive behavioral therapy

and Web-based approaches as well as the most effective therapies for soldiers who have co-occurring disorders, such as depression and substance abuse. Researchers will also determine if early intervention, within two months of returning from war, can improve outcomes.

The research will examine the high rate of smoking among returning military personnel. “Smoking prevalence in the military, especially among men aged 18 to 25 years, is nearly double that of the civilian population,” said Cathy Backinger, Ph.D., chief of NCI’s Tobacco Control Research Branch. “NCI research funded under this initiative, looking at reducing smoking by military personnel, will go a long way toward helping service members avoid developing lung cancer and the many other diseases caused by smoking.”

In addition, some of the newly funded research projects will examine how veterans attempt to reintegrate into their work and family lives after experiencing war conditions.

“These research projects will give us important information about the ways that combat stress and substance abuse affect returning military personnel and their families,” said NIDA Director Dr. Nora D. Volkow. “This knowledge will be used to improve our prevention and treatment approaches, which we hope will reduce the burden of combat-related trauma. Working cooperatively with the VA and other partners will help in finding solutions for this shared concern.”

“The Department of Veterans Affairs has a commitment to meet the full range of our Veterans’ physical and mental health care needs, and that includes addressing substance abuse,” said Dr. Joel Kupersmith, chief research and development officer for VA. “This coordinated research effort is one more way we are turning that commitment into action.”

“NIAAA-supported research has documented a significant association between combat deployment of U.S. military personnel to Iraq and Afghanistan and the onset of alcohol problems upon their return to the U.S.,” notes NIAAA Acting Director Kenneth R. Warren, Ph.D. “We hope that by developing new strategies to prevent and treat alcohol abuse among returning servicemen and women, these new research projects will improve the lives of military families.”

The July 2009 Funding Announcement press release can be found at <http://drugabuse.gov/newsroom/09/NR7-30.html>.

A complete listing of grants can be found below.

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The National Institute on Drug Abuse is a component of the National Institutes of Health, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. NIDA supports most of the world's research on the health aspects of drug abuse and addiction. The Institute carries out a large variety of programs to inform policy and improve practice. Fact sheets on the health effects of drugs of abuse and information on NIDA research and other activities can be found on the NIDA home page at [www.drugabuse.gov](http://www.drugabuse.gov). To order publications in English or Spanish, call NIDA's new DrugPubs research dissemination center at 1-877-NIDA-NIH or 240-645-0228 (TDD) or fax or email requests to 240-645-0227 or [drugpubs@nida.nih.gov](mailto:drugpubs@nida.nih.gov). Online ordering is available at [drugpubs.drugabuse.gov](http://drugpubs.drugabuse.gov).

The National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism, part of the NIH, is the primary U.S. agency for conducting and supporting research on the causes, consequences, prevention, and treatment of alcohol abuse, alcoholism, and alcohol problems, and disseminates research findings to general, professional, and academic audiences. Additional alcohol research information and publications are available at [www.niaaa.nih.gov](http://www.niaaa.nih.gov).

NCI leads the National Cancer Program and the NIH effort to dramatically reduce the burden of cancer and improve the lives of cancer patients and their families, through research into prevention and cancer biology, the development of new interventions, and the training and mentoring of new researchers. For more information about cancer, please visit the NCI Web site at <http://www.cancer.gov> or call NCI's Cancer Information Service at 1-800-4-CANCER (1-800-422-6237).

The National Institutes of Health (NIH) - *The Nation's Medical Research Agency* - includes 27 Institutes and Centers and is a component of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. It is the primary Federal agency for conducting and supporting basic, clinical and translational medical research, and it investigates the causes, treatments, and cures for both common and rare diseases. For more information about NIH and its programs, visit [www.nih.gov](http://www.nih.gov).

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) - VA's Office of Research and Development (ORD) aspires to discover knowledge, develop VA researchers and health care leaders, and create innovations that advance health care for our veterans and the nation. For more information about VA Research: <http://www.research.va.gov>.

### **Complete List of Military Research Grants:**

#### **National Institute on Drug Abuse:** (NIDA Press Office: 301-443-6245)

Use and Abuse of Prescription Opioids Among Operation Enduring Freedom/Operation Iraqi Freedom Veterans/University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences at Little Rock  
Integrated Treatment of Operation Enduring Freedom/Operation Iraqi Freedom Veterans with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder and Substance Use Disorders/Medical University of South Carolina  
First Longitudinal Study of Missed Treatment Opportunities Using DOD and VA Data/Brandeis University  
Integrated Cognitive Behavioral Therapy for Co-Occurring Post Traumatic Stress Disorder and Substance Use Disorders/Dartmouth College  
Effectiveness of a Web-enhanced Parenting Program for Military Families/University of Minnesota, Twin Cities

#### **National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism:** (NIAAA Press Office: 301-443-3860)

Stress-induced Drinking in Operation Enduring Freedom/Operation Iraqi Freedom Veterans: The Role of Combat History and PTSD/Medical University of South Carolina  
Veteran Reintegration, Mental Health and Substance Use in the Inner-City/National Development and Research Institutes in New York City  
Web-based Cognitive Behavioral Therapy for Substance Misusing and Post Traumatic Stress Disorder Symptomatic Operation Enduring Freedom/Operation Iraqi Freedom Veterans/National Development and Research Institutes, Inc. in New York City and Syracuse University

Personalized Drinking Feedback Interventions for Operation Enduring Freedom/Operation Iraqi Freedom Veterans/University of Missouri-Columbia

**National Cancer Institute:** (NCI Press Office: 301-496-6641)

Enhancing Civilian Support for Military Tobacco Control/University of California San Francisco and the National Development and Research Institutes, Inc.

**U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs:** (VA Press Office: 202-461-7600)

Gender Differences in Post-deployment Addictive Behaviors Among Returning Veterans/VA Medical Center, West Haven, Conn.

An Ethnographic Study of Post-Deployment Substance Abuse and Treatment Seeking/VA Medical Center, Little Rock, Ark.

Tobacco Use and Alcohol Misuse among Participants of the Millennium Cohort Study/VA Medical Center, Seattle, Wash.

Integrated vs. Sequential Treatment for Post Traumatic Stress Disorder and Addiction Among Operation Enduring Freedom/Operation Iraqi Freedom Veterans/VA Medical Center, Philadelphia, Pa.